

TRANSCRIPT – Patrick Brown Media Avail on Government Accountability –
October 19, 2017

MPP: Patrick Brown

Media: Rushowy, Jones, Rath, CP24, CBC, Lamoureux

[START TRANSCRIPT]

Brown:

- Good morning, bonjour
- Thank you for joining us here today
- I'm joined by my energy critic, MPP Todd Smith
- There is a clear pattern of Liberal political corruption under Kathleen Wynne
- After 14 long years, they've lost the ability to distinguish between the public interest and the interest of the Liberal party of Ontario
- To them, they are one and the same
- *French* [repeats that they are one and the same]
- From the gas plant billings to selling access to Ministers to awarding subsidies to their donors, no rule, no convention, no sense of proprietary stands in their way
- The dispense with them all whenever it suits them
- This week, Ontario's Auditor General uncovered an appalling attempt to hide the true cost of \$4-billion
- The cost of Kathleen Wynne's hydro rebate scheme
- A price that would be paid by rate payers
- I want you to appreciate this
- \$4-billion that they seem to um – ignore and uh – try to spin like it's nothing
- \$4-billion
- That's four gas plants
- That's – you know I think of how hard my communities fundraised and worked to get the RVH, the new RVH and cancer centre
- That's 12 regional cancer centres
- That's 13,000 new hospital beds
- That's 240 new schools
- This – this is a terrible day because it's – it's – this is a loss
- It's a tangible loss for the people of Ontario
- *French*
- She concluded, the auditor general concluded, senior government officials knowingly ignored the government's own policy for preparing financial statements to create an unnecessary, complex financing structure
- This was designed to keep to the true financial impact of its rate reduction scheme off the province's books
- More damningly, the auditor general said that the Canadian public sector accounting – accountability standards are the standard for all federal and provincial governments of Canada

- And that the Liberal government have brushed aside these standards
- It's – it's – unbelievable when you read the auditor general's report and it says they made up their own accounting rules
- Um, it's unbelievable
- The unavoidable and very strong suggestion that something highly improper has transpired
- In the real world of ordinary people, when you break the rules there are consequences
- *French*
- If for publicly owned company attempted to deceit shareholders in the same way, the perpetrators would face prosecution
- What's further in her report, the Auditor General confirmed she still has not received all the documents that she has requested, dating back to May 31, 2017
- Those responsible should be held accountable
- I am therefore calling on the Information and Privacy Commissioner to investigate the apparent misconduct
- The Ontario PC caucus will also be calling for the IESO to appear before the standing committee on justice policy
- And finally I've instructed my chief of staff to write the Secretary of the Cabinet to ensure that all correspondence pertaining to this matter is preserved and necessary precaution in due of past Liberal behaviour in similar circumstances
- **French**
- We do not have to accept political corruption as a matter of course in Ontario
- It's time that someone took a stand
- Drew a line in the sand and said enough
- Kathleen Wynne and the Liberal Party of Ontario and their insider friends have to know the days in which they can break their rules to their own benefit are coming to an end
- **French**
- And thank you
- Merci
- And I'm happy to take any other questions

*Lamoureux: **French***

Brown

- **French**
- You know, this is an officer of the – the legislature
- This is – to have this – you have this role so that we can know the facts
- And when you have the – an officer of the parliament saying that the government's making up their own rules
- That they're not being transparent
- They're being secretive
- And it's obviously very worrisome

Rath: Is there something criminal going on here?

Brown

- Well, let me say, first of all I don't think we have to accept political corruption as a standard in Ontario
- The fact that there's great lack of transparency, leaves a very strong impression that something improper has transpired
- And that's why I'm supporting the Auditor General's request that we have the full disclosure
- And that, that's why I'm asking proper precautions be taken, so that missing correspondence doesn't go missing from [anyone]

*Rath: the Financial Accountability Officer this morning said *inaudible* is saying that Ontario has to either lower its spending by 6 billion dollars a year, or raise revenues by 6 billion dollars a year. Or, essentially, the budgets are going to spiral into so much debt that you won't be able *inaudible*. How would you do that, how would you lower spending, or would you raise revenue? What would you do?*

Brown:

- Well, our finance critic has pointed this out that there is no balanced budget right now in Ontario
- And that independent legislative officers are all saying that, that the numbers don't add up
- And, you know, these new terms, they are making up, the 'off-budget debt' or the new accounting rules—that doesn't wash in the, in the, the real world
- It's one of the reasons that I've been pushing across the province for a value-for-money audit
- I don't believe taxpayers are getting good value for money with this government
- And, frankly, if you look at some of the past Auditor General recommendations, it, it leaves tremendous opportunity where taxpayer dollars could be spent more effectively
- And I'll give you an example, on, on infrastructure—from that report last year, where they said the overspend could be 25 percent, because we don't measure performance, we don't measure outcomes, and, and of course, there was the case that all of you covered, where part of the truss in a bridge being built up-, upside-down
- And then they gave the same contract to a company that never built the bridge—another and bigger contract
- The 403, that repaving happening every 2 years instead of every 15 years
- There is a lot of waste at Queen's Park
- And I would adopt those recommendations of the Auditor General, I want to make sure that every single dollar we spend is spent in a manner that is transparent and effective

Rushowy: the Star's been trying through FOI requests to get the Auditor General to release emails between her and bureaucrats. Do you think she should release them, because she's refused so far?

Brown:

- Well, and I, and I'm, I'm not, I wasn't aware of that request, but, you know, certainly, it's the Auditor General's responsibility to, to expose the facts, expose the, the truth
- And where a government's been misleading, I think that's their responsibility
- You know, whether there should be emails disclosed from the Auditor General, you know, I, I would suggest, you know, whatever is the standard in other provinces would be a standard that we should follow here

Smith:

- Mind if I add something to that?
- When Kathleen Wynne came on the scene back in 2013, she promised that we were going to have a more open and transparent government here
- She claimed that things were going to be different, here we are—we're in the same mess we're in
- So the Auditor General is still waiting to get all the documents, you know
- I mean, you heard yesterday, and two days ago, actually, in the Auditor General's report, that 2 million emails are out there on this issue—on the Fair Hydro Plan
- She has 15,000 of them
- She's still waiting, she's still waiting for boxes full of emails to be turned over
- And we're waiting too, and that's why Patrick has brought in these initiatives today, to try to get to the bottom of the truth on this scandal

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